

Message Text

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71

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01

ACDA-07 SCA-01 VO-03 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01

LAB-04 SIL-01 /082 W

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P R 160022Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7429

INFO ALL CONSULATES IN MEXICO VIA POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 11917

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MX

SUBJECT: COUP RUMORS HIT MEXICO CITY

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED FIVE OR SIX CALLS IN LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS EITHER WARNING OF OR ASKING IF EMBASSY HAS KNOWLEDGE OF IMPENDING "COUP". OTHER EMBASSY SOURCES HAVE REPORTED IN LAST DAY THAT THERE ARE ALSO FEARS THAT PRESIDENT WILL DECLARE STATE OF EMERGENCY, CITING CIVIL UNREST (AT PRESENT NON-EXISTENT) AS REASON, AND EXTEND HIS TERM OF OFFICE. WE THINK COMBINATION OF DISTRUST OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA, CONFUSION RESULTING FROM PESO FLOAT, AND WIVES' TALE STYLE BELIEF THAT SEPTEMBER 16 BANK AND PRESS HOLIDAY PROVIDES SUITABLE OCCASION ARE PROBABLY RESPONSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED FIVE OR SIX CALLS EITHER WARNING OF OR ASKING IF EMBASSY HAD KNOWLEDGE OF IMPENDING "COUP" IN MEXICO. ANONYMOUS CALLER SEPT 14 SIMPLY WARNED THAT COUP WOULD TAKE PLACE SEPT 15 AND HUNG UP. FOUR OR FIVE CALLS SEPT 15 TO VISA SECTION SOUGHT INFORMATION FOR VISAS AND ASKED IF EMBASSY HAD ANY KNOWLEDGE OF COUP WHICH CALLERS FEARED IMMINENT.

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3. MEXICAN BUSINESSMAN WITH LARGE NUMBER GOM AND PRI

CONTRACTS TOLD EMBOFFS SEPT 15 THAT THERE EXISTS WIDE-SPREAD CONCERN AMONG HIS CONTACTS THAT PRESIDENT IS MANUFACTURING SITUATION (RURAL UNREST, ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY, LABOR STRIKES) WHICH WOULD PERMIT HIM TO DECLARE STATE OF EMERGENCY AND SOMEHOW EXTEND HIS TERM OF OFFICE. (NOTE: ARTICLE 29 OF MEXICAN CONSTITUTION AUTHORIZES PRESIDENT, WITH CONSENT OF CABINET AND CONGRESS, TO SUSPEND CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES FOR "LIMITED PERIOD OF TIME".) THIS BUSINESSMAN'S CONTACTS ARE "ECHEVERRIA PEOPLE" WHO APPARENTLY ARE NOT CLAIMING TO HAVE ANY SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE, BUT ARE DRAWING THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS FROM PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF PRESIDENT'S MODUS OPERANDI AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS OF LAST TWO MONTHS (EXCELSIOR AFFAIR, SUPPRESSION OF INSURGENT LABOR MOVEMENT, ATTACK ON LOPEZ PORTILLO'S SISTER, PESO FLOAT, THREATENED GENERAL STRIKE).

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH RURAL LAND INVASIONS HAVE BEEN A PROBLEM HERE OVER THE LAST YEAR OR SO, PESO DE FACTO DEVALUATION HAS CAUSED GREAT CONFUSION, AND PRI UNIONS ARE THREATENING A GENERAL STRIKE IF THEY DO NOT RECEIVE A 65 PERCENT EXTRAORDINARY WAGE INCREASE, NOTHING APPROACHING "CIVIL UNREST" IS HAPPENING HERE YET. WHAT IS HAPPENING IS A KIND OF COLLECTIVE ANXIETY AS MEXICO ENTERS THE LAST THREE MONTHS OF ECHEVERRIA'S TERM--ANXIETY BASED ON THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE IS A DEVIOUS MAN WITH A STRONG LOVE OF POWER AND THAT HE MAY NOT BE ABLE, DESPITE HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS, TO BRING HIMSELF TO TURN OVER THE COMMAND. APPARENTLY EVEN ECHEVERRIA SUPPORTERS DISTRUST THE PRESIDENT ENOUGH TO CONSIDER A STATE OF EMERGENCY SCENARIO CONCEIVABLE. THE UNCERTAIN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION APPEARS TO BE COMBINING WITH THIS SUSPICION OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE LOCAL CONVENTIONAL POLITICAL WISDOM THAT TOMORROW'S (SEPT 16) BANKING AND PRESS HOLIDAY PROVIDES THE IDEAL OCCASION FOR THE PRESIDENT TO TAKE SOME SUCH ACTION, TO BRING THESE LONG MOUNTING FEARS TO A CRESCENDO.

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